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Introduction: Toward Ethnographies of Communication

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# *Introduction: Toward Ethnographies of Communication*<sup>1</sup>

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## I

THE study of language as it engages human life has a fitful history. So at least it must seem from the ups and downs of technical study of such engagement by linguists, anthropologists, and sociologists, and from the recurrent calls for it to be taken up. More than a generation ago Sapir (1929:165) wrote in words with a quite modern ring:

One can only hope that linguists will become increasingly aware of the significance of their subject in the general field of science and will not stand aloof behind a tradition that threatens to become scholastic when not vitalized by interests which lie beyond the formal interest in language itself.

Sapir's hope may seem forlorn, if one regards the dominant aspect of linguistics in the first part of the twentieth century. The concern to establish autonomy as subject and profession (to which Sapir contributed notably) has led in many hands to the segregation, often quite narrowly, of that which is to be accepted as properly linguistic from that which is not. Moreover, at a time when many anthropologists have just accustomed themselves to the structural approaches to linguistic form developed in the last generation, new approaches emerge, approaches whose attempts at logical formalization may seem in some hands to carry the linguist's study of language even further from the concerns and perspectives of the anthropologist.

Formalization may indeed seem uppermost in the work of descriptive linguists, and many linguists may deny a relation between their study and studies of cultural content and social form. Anthropological linguistics proper, the study of the little-known majority of the world's languages, may come to seem a second-class citizen in the halls of descriptive theory, supplanted in its earlier pride of place with Boas, Sapir, and Bloomfield, as bearer of exceptions and the objectivity gained from the study of alien patterns, by analysts considering their own languages the favored cases for study, and chatting of universals and intuitions. Yet formalization may be a preparation of better means to anthropological ends, and some who are formalists show more concern for the implications their notions have for behavior and the behavioral sciences than do some who are not. Among interests of long-standing anthropological concern, historical linguistics continues to be near the center of the field, and semantics, poetics, and comparative study of animal communication gain prominence. Moreover, there has been since World War II a continuing, even growing, sense of linked interest and purpose on the part of a good many anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, and linguists, agreed in one or another way with Sapir (1929:166) that linguists "must become increasingly concerned with the many

anthropological, sociological, and psychological problems which invade the field of language."

"Ethnolinguistics," "psycholinguistics," "sociolinguistics"—these, and the older standby, "language and culture," are the chief terms by which one or another common cause between linguistics and other fields, such as anthropology especially, has come to be known in the period since World War II. "Linguistics" itself would do, of course, if linguists generally would agree to such a scope for the discipline. Such an event seems unlikely, and composite terms are likely to prevail for some time, wherever something of concern both to linguists and others is in question.

The terms cited above do not, however, answer the need set in the context of the present volume. Such terms tend to identify either the correlation of products of separate pre-existent enterprises, or the study of some one portion of the range of problems in which language is correlated with other things. Such activities are essential. Problems of correlation are central to several of the present papers, and some portion of the range is a favored focus for the work of each contributor, some of whom would consider their work to be sociolinguistic in a strict sense, for example, within the general scope the volume represents. Yet if each of the papers begins with language and a particular problem in some way, each has a larger goal, extending its concern to the place of studies of language in some more general conception of an object of study. If, then, we make no choice among terms such as "ethnolinguistics," "sociolinguistics," and "psycholinguistics," it is because we believe that an adequate approach to "the many anthropological, sociological, and psychological problems which invade the field of language" must lay a foundation having characteristics that such terms in their most characteristic and useful senses do not suggest.

Our justification for adopting a novel term for the present set of papers thus is that we believe that there is more to current work than the opening up to technical study of many facets of the use and role of language and related codes. Behind the variety and flexibility, there are questions of approach and context adequate to the whole, and, for anthropologists, of their special contribution to the whole. The needed term must be one not only for coordinating language with other things, or for suggesting a portion of the range of problems, but one of general scope. For anthropologists and anthropologically-minded investigators from other disciplines, *ethnography of communication* seems best to indicate the necessary scope, and to convey and encourage the fundamental contribution they best can make: studies ethnographic in basis, and of communication in the scope and kind of patterned complexity with which they deal.<sup>2</sup>

In short, "ethnography of communication" implies two characteristics that an adequate approach to the problems of language which engage anthropologists must have. Firstly, such an approach cannot simply take separate results from linguistics, psychology, sociology, ethnology, as given, and seek to correlate them, however partially useful such work is. It must call attention to the need for fresh kinds of data, to the need to investigate directly the use of language in contexts of situation so as to discern patterns proper to speech activ-

ity, patterns which escape separate studies of grammar, of personality, of religion, of kinship and the like, each abstracting from the patterning of speech activity as such into some other frame of reference. Secondly, such an approach cannot take linguistic form, a given code, or speech itself, as frame of reference. It must take as context a community, investigating its communicative habits as a whole, so that any given use of channel and code takes its place as but part of the resources upon which the members of the community draw.

It is not that linguistics does not have a vital role. Well-analyzed linguistic materials are indispensable, and the logic of linguistic methodology is a principal influence in the ethnographic perspective of the approach. It is rather that it is not linguistics, but ethnography—not language, but communication—which must provide the frame of reference within which the place of language in culture and society is to be described. The boundaries of the community within which communication is possible; the boundaries of the situations within which communication occurs; the means and purposes and patterns of selection, their structure and hierarchy, that constitute the communicative economy of a group, are conditioned, to be sure, by properties of the linguistic codes within the group, but are not controlled by them. The same linguistic means may be organized to quite different communicative ends; the same communicative ends may be served by organization of, or by focus upon, quite varied means. Facets of the cultural values and beliefs, social institutions and forms, roles and personalities, history and ecology of a community must be examined together in relation to communicative events and patterns as focus of study (just as every aspect of a community's life may be brought selectively to bear on the study of a focus such as kinship, sex, or conflict). When this is done, it will be found that much that has impinged upon linguistics as variation and deviation has an organization of its own. What seem variation and deviation from the standpoint of a single linguistic code emerge as structure and pattern from the standpoint of the communicative economy of the group in whose habits the code exists.

The structure and pattern that emerge will force reconsideration, moreover, of the description of the linguistic codes themselves. Just as elements and relations of phonology appear partly in a new light when viewed from the higher stratum of grammar, and just as elements and relations of grammatical form appear in a new light when viewed from the still higher stratum of sememics (Lamb 1964), so elements and relations of the linguistic code as a whole will appear partly in a new light, viewed from the organization of the elements and relations of the speech act, itself a part of a system of communicative acts characteristic of a group.

## II

To project the ethnography of communication in such a way is tantamount to the belief that there awaits constitution a second descriptive science comprising language, beside that of present linguistics proper, toward which current trends and lines of work such as those represented in this volume converge and contribute. John Gumperz and I hold—and the other contributors at least do

not denounce—the view that this is so. Goffman argues as much from one standpoint, that of the study of the rules governing and sustaining face-to-face interaction, and, indeed, his paper strikes to the heart of the matter. It is not possible to say much in detail about such a science now, although more will be said about where it belongs and how it may be approached in sections V and VI of this introduction. The ways in which the present papers contribute and converge can be made salient, however, by noticing two underlying themes. What most of all unites them, reporting as they do on diverse and still emerging lines of work, is that each in its way approaches language neither as abstracted form nor as an abstract correlate of a community, but as situated in the flux and pattern of communicative events, and as in integral relation to them.

One instructive way to consider and compare the contents of the present volume thus is in terms of the use each contribution makes of the notion of communicative behavior, especially linguistic behavior, as situated. Albert devotes a major section of her paper to social structural definitions of speech situations, set against the background of world-view and values, and sums up: "Together, social role and situational prescriptions determine the order of precedence of speakers, relevant conventions of politeness, appropriate formulas and styles of speech, and topics of discussion." Bernstein takes what is in conventional terms a single language and part of a single speech community, and discusses how the structure of social relations can engender and sustain two quite different general coding systems, systems whose differences have major consequences for the lives and chances, perhaps for the world-views and values, of children whose experience of communicative situations may lead to competence in only one. Arewa and Dundes' account of proverb use is of course dependent on specific contexts of situation.

Placing the face-to-face verbal encounter at the center of her definition of sociolinguistics, Ervin-Tripp accompanies illustration of her own research with an incisive survey of other current research into relations of covariation among sociolinguistic elements. She shows as well the place of studies of marginal systems (or subcodes) of special social interest, such as that by Ferguson of baby talk.

Fischer uses the organizing power of a socially defined context to investigate aspects of the terminology of address. His work bears on the classic language-and-social-structure problem, that of the relation of kinship terminology to behavior, and has import for work in ethnographic semantics. Fischer's paper indicates that the materials of analyses of systems of folk taxonomy, particularly componential analyses of kinship terminologies, may be organized in terms of but one type of relevant structuring context. To take situations of use as contexts may disclose terminological structure where none had otherwise appeared, and may show the kinship terms themselves entering into differently constituted sets. By implication, Fischer's paper raises the general question: what are the valid contexts within which to analyze sets of terms? Fraake carries the notion of structural analysis within social contexts further, and by means of defining and sketching the place of a *genre*, drinking talk, within a communicative

event, combines an illustration of ethnographic method with an indication of how in single event many features often separately analyzed may be integrated.

In a paper closely related to those by Bernstein and Ervin-Tripp, Gumperz uses research in two villages, one North Indian, one Norwegian, to develop technical linguistic consequences of adopting a social frame of reference as starting point. Whereas Bernstein develops the twin notions of elaborated and restricted codes, Gumperz develops the concept of verbal repertoire as an analogue of the concept of social structure, one which permits dealing properly with the role of the linguistic code as a social index.

Hall continues his explorations of what Goffman has called "the presentation of self in everyday life" with a sketch of an aspect of communicative behavior that is subtle yet important, and peculiarly situational.

In the example of Labov's work presented here, a sociological survey and sample form the base for a linguistic survey. Reversing a common approach to linguistic variation, which starts from a linguistic system already given, Labov finds analysis of social variation to be prerequisite, if the systematic nature of the linguistic data is to be revealed. In addition, situational contexts are essential criteria to accurately determining that the object of study is casual speech. Labov's work as a whole, it is fair to say, is the most exciting in American dialectology. Drawing on exemplary scholarship in the Romance field, whose traditions of combined linguistic and ethnographic study make it closer to American anthropology than is usually recognized, Malkiel suggests the consequences for the understanding of long-term linguistic change that follow from adoption of a contextual viewpoint. He sketches a diachronic counterpart of the view toward synchronic study adopted by the other papers, namely, taking the speech community as frame of reference, and viewing the speech community as dynamic and complex, rather than as monolithically uniform.

### III

The second theme linking the papers is that of the study of communicative form and function in integral relation to each other.

We touch here on long-term trends in linguistic and anthropological thought. Two trends stand out. On the one hand, there has been dominant in linguistics for much of this century a concern for the autonomy of linguistic form, and for the autonomy of linguistics as its study. This concern, joined with other intellectual currents, has led some linguists to divorce the structural study of language from meaning in its broader sense and from social context. Indeed, many anthropologists have interpreted such a self-conception on the part of linguists as lack of relevance, except in some millennium of correlation, or to practical work for purposes not linguistic. On the other hand, there has been a history in American anthropology of argument for an integral intellectual significance of linguistics to general anthropology (Boas 1911, Sapir 1929, Whorf 1940, Levi-Strauss 1945, Greenberg 1948, Hockett 1948, Trager 1949, Pike 1954, Goodenough 1957a, and others). A certain number of anthropologists have linked their work to such views.

Now, views as to the significance of linguistics can take many forms, depending on the conception held of the linguistics that is found significant. Some views assume divorce of linguistic form from context and function, putting linguistics on a pedestal perhaps, as an austere model, but not expecting it to be an intimate in the tasks at hand. Such views are not of direct use to ethnographies of communication. An apt illustration of the issue in terms of events is found in Bloomfield's remark that, if a beggar says "I'm hungry" to obtain food, and a child to avoid going to bed, then linguistics is concerned with what is the same in the two events. It abstracts, in other words, from context. It is interesting to note that pragmatics has been characterized in a way exactly complementary, as "all those aspects which serve to distinguish one communication event from any other where the sign *types* may be the same" (Cherry 1961: 225, emphasis in original). It abstracts, in other words, from linguistic form.

Such views are not the only ones to be found, but they have been characteristic and most practice has exemplified them. (For different views in principle of linguistic, see Uldall's formulation of glossematics (1957: 29-30), and the writing of a number of British linguists stimulated by J. R. Firth, such as Michael Halliday, Trevor Hill, R. H. Robins, etc.; more is said of pragmatics in V *infra*.) For ethnographies of communication, however, the aim must be not so to divide the communicative event, divorcing message-form (sign type) and context of use from one another. The aim must be to keep the multiple hierarchy of relations among messages and contexts in view (cf. Bateson 1963). Studies of the social contexts and functions of communication, if divorced from the study of the means that serve them, are as little to the purpose as are studies of communicative means if divorced from study of the contexts and functions they serve. Methodologically, of course, it is not a question of limiting a structural perspective inspired by linguistics to a particular part of the communicative event, but of extending it to the whole.

Thus, the ethnography of communication is indebted to the methodological gains from studies of linguistic form for its own sake, and to the climate of opinion created by the various arguments for the anthropological significance of linguistics. In terms of long-range trends, however, its roots are deeper and more pervasive. On the one hand, there is the continuing trend in anthropology away from study of cultural content as product toward its study as process, away from study of abstracted categories, departments of culture, toward study of situations and events. On the other hand, there is the continuing trend in linguistics toward study of the full complexity of language in terms of what the Prague Circle as long ago as 1929 (the year of Sapir's "The Status of Linguistics as a Science") called "functional and structural analysis," and which Jakobson now designates as a "means-ends model" (Jakobson 1963). Given the inclusion of communicative means other than language within the scope of the latter, the interests that converge in the ethnography of communication are but part of these larger trends.

To take folkloristic examples, the abstraction of grammars from their use in contexts of situation has been paralleled to a large extent in the study of other

codes and message forms that enter into communicative events, codes such as those of music and drama, and such genres as the proverb. Ethnomusicologists have concentrated on painstaking analysis of musical form and other folklorists on the objective documentation of collected texts. Primitive and ritual drama, the folkloristic communicative event par excellence, has had close to complete neglect. Recently there seems to have begun a turn to the study of performance, of the use of musical and other folkloristic elements and codes in their communicative context (cf. Herzog 1945; Smith 1957; Lomax 1959; Merriam 1964).

Turning to the other side of the relation, that of context and function, studies of values and world-view seldom focus down to the particular patterns of cultural rhetoric, logic, and poetics, as does Albert here, drawing on her work with the Burundi. Again, it is not rare to have an anthropological account of important events such as gossiping, adjudication, and the like, but it is rare to have an account that begins, as does Frake's of Subanun drinking talk, to formulate rules, including reference to the linguistic rules, that would state how to conduct such behavior appropriately.

The ways in which the present papers reflect concern for an integral relation between communicative form and function can for the rest only be passed briefly in review. Such a relation pervades both the practical context and the theoretical conception of Bernstein's work. Ervin-Tripp's paper centers on concern for specific relations between functions and communicative forms. Properties of both form and use enter into Ferguson's delineation of baby talk. Fischer's analysis suggests individual functions for use of the forms identified, and a functional trend for the system of forms as a whole. The purposes of the participants are an ever-present part of Frake's account of drinking talk, as they are of Albert's account of Burundi talk in general. Goffman here stresses a supervening functional level, as against possible obsession with correlations and indicators, but the role of linguistic means is not omitted, and participant observation of "face work" and of other communicative means is central to his work. Verbal repertoire, Gumperz' leading concept, is defined both linguistically and socially. The focus of Hall's paper is precisely upon the tie between overt messages and the foreshadowing part of their context in communicative events. Labov's interview method depends upon functional relations, and he counts subjective reactions, both deliberate and unconscious, as part of the over-all structure of linguistic behavior. The relation of his measures to social mobility and social insecurity are developed in other portions of his work.

Malkiel's work reflects the materials and the traditions of Romance scholarship. The richness of the record, and the temper of the traditions, both require one to cope with the true complexity of process that may be at work, whether one is portraying linguistic change, or reconstructing from its results. Malkiel indicates a plurality of processes of sound change, and their dependence on types of situation and speech community. While the state of a language may condition what changes can occur, sociolinguistic factors control what changes do occur, as variations and innovations are accepted and rejected in a range and succession of situations. (For references on the social basis of regular sound change,



and other processes, note Hymes 1964d:462-463.) As does Malkiel in his paper here and in the detailed studies he cites, one must recognize that the features of the diachronic record depend on the interplay within complex speech communities of a variety of functions.

#### IV

Beyond the common themes of approaching language and communication in integral relation to social context and function, the present papers are quite individual and diverse. Like other pertinent lines of work (some are mentioned in VII *infra*), each line of work represented here stems from some particular concern with the role and course of language. Separately, each paper might have appeared in one or another type of journal or book, and been taken there as a specialized contribution, and, perhaps, a further indication of how widespread an interest in language has become. In their diversity, indeed, lies part of the value of the papers collectively, for the diversity shows the range of interests and of methods which can contribute to the ethnography of communication.

In terms of method, the present range includes the several ethnographic approaches of Albert, Dundes, Ervin-Tripp, Fischer, Frake, Gumperz, Hall, and Labov; the linking of ethnography with methodological concerns in terms of the study of ethnophilosophy on the part of Albert; in terms of the formulation of cultural "grammars" on the part of Frake; the linking of ethnography with the use of surveys by Fischer and Labov; the emphasis by Labov on useful variables and quantitative treatment; the use of the native informant as collaborator by Dundes; the emphasis on participant observation, and linguistically inspired formulation, by Frake and Hall; the typological, definitional approach of Ferguson, joined with a concern for comparison of cases on the broadest scale; Malkiel's use of a hypothetical model; and the various experimental techniques, associated with interview (Ervin-Tripp), participant observation and interview (Gumperz), and group discussion (Bernstein). There is also the review of techniques and strategies of research that Ervin-Tripp provides. To it should be added the interpretation of existing ethnographic records, a philological concern with structural analysis that is essential if as much as possible of the range of human variation and system in these matters is to be comprised. (Reinterpretation of ethnographic data is illustrated in Hymes [ms. A] by analysis of acculturational accounts and contrastive depiction of Crow and Hidatsa cultures, as revealing different functional involvements of language; and by analysis of Wishram ethnography as showing a hierarchically arranged system of major communicative events, as part of myth, name, and guardian spirit patterns, linked to a restrictive valuation placed on discursive use of language.)

#### V

Despite their diversity, or because of it, the papers are further linked by a collective implication. We have seen that they call attention to language and other communicative codes as used in situations of which they are but one component; show concern to keep message and code at least in tandem with con-

text and use; and exhibit a variety of ways in which relevant studies can be developed. What, now, of the general subject toward whose constitution we believe them to converge and contribute?

By broaching together so many of the lines of pertinent work, the papers invite us to consider them as more than disparate invasions of an interlevel between language and the rest of social life; they raise collectively the question as to what frame of reference accommodates them all. To have called them aspects of the ethnography of communication raises the question as to how far such a term can be given content beyond an incomplete ostensive definition by such papers themselves, common themes, and the general characterization: studies ethnographic in basis and communicative in scope.

From many standpoints, there is indeed a frame of reference that accommodates all the papers, and its name is social anthropology, or sociology, or psychology, or some other general category. The work represented here does fall somewhere into place within the purview of each such standpoint, and there can be no quarrel with any. What is essential is that the distinctive focus of concern represented here be recognized and cultivated. One way to state the need is to remark that there are anthropological, sociological, and psychological studies of many kinds, but of whole ethnographies focused on communicative behavior, and of comparative ethnological and social anthropological studies based upon them, there are none. Even studies of the manifold individual kinds of phenomena of interest to an ethnography of communication are few and far between, if one asks for what secondly unites the present papers, their concern to study communicative form and function integrally.

These remarks apply equally to the putative field under which many would subsume the concerns represented here, semiotics. De Saussure had proposed it as a field more general than linguistics, and Levi-Strauss has characterized it as the study of the life of signs in the bosom of social life, subsuming both linguistics and social anthropology in the proper conception of the latter as semiology (1960). Despite the general meanings given the term, however, semiotics and its congeners, such as semiology, continue to suggest most readily logical analysis, and the study of systems of signs as codes alone. Such indeed is the direction taken by Levi-Strauss' exposition, which considers the contrastive status of elements as warranted by the comparative perspective of the investigator, rather than by contrast within the given system itself. (For a critique, see Hymes 1964b.) What must be the fundamental anthropological contribution to any semiotic discipline or theory, the empirical field study of systems of signs in systems of use, seems lost from sight.

Here a division of semiotics in the tripartite formulation of Morris (1946) might serve. Pragmatics, concerned with the use of signs by an interpreter, might be the bridge between the present area of concern and linguistics proper, and stand as name for the cultivation of theory of the use of language (and other codes), beside theory of their formal and semantic structuring (Morris' syntactics and semantics). Some characterizations of pragmatics, to be sure, would not be adequate, as has been noted above in III. Cherry's account of pragmatics as

concerned with what varies in import while message-form remains constant allows for but one of the two relations between structures of action and structures of communicative form. The relations between means and ends are multiple in both directions, the same means serving varied ends and the same ends being served by varied means.

Put technically in terms of the criteria by which a linguistic theorist, Lamb (1964), establishes the presence of separate strata, we can indeed see a natural extension of stratificational theory of grammar to incorporation of features of action. Lamb recognizes the linguistic strata involving the phoneme, morpheme, lexeme, and sememe by the twin criteria of relations between strata of diversification and neutralization. The first criterion involves such facts as that one element of meaning on the semological level can occur in diverse lexemic representations (as in "dog house" : "kennel," or "cat house" : "whore house"); the second criterion involves such facts as that the same lexemic representation may serve diverse elements of meaning (as in the first elements of "dog house": "dog fight" or "cat house" : "cat fight"). One might well recognize a fifth, higher stratum involving the pragme, as an element or feature of action, on the basis that one feature of action can occur in diverse sememic, etc., representations, and the same sememic, etc., representations can serve diverse features of action. To use an example from Susan Ervin-Tripp, the same intention of requests may be encoded, "Would you get me my coat?" and "Don't you think it's getting cold?"; and conversely, to complete the example, "Don't you think it's getting cold?" may express (among other things) the request either of "Get me my coat" or "Take me inside." (It is the latter relationship between strata, neutralization, that Cherry singles out.)

Invaluable as a structural pragmatics would be, it would not suffice for the whole of the subject. Nor, as ordinarily conceived, would communication, or information, theory, and cybernetics, two headings under which many would place the concerns represented here. In point of fact, what is sometimes specifically meant by each of the latter terms would seem to fit, quite importantly, as separate aspects of a general sketch (VI) of what an ethnographic strategy for research into communication might comprise. (A structural pragmatics would seem to fit particularly with the third aspect.) Here again is the rub. As stated before, there can be no quarrel with any general standpoint within whose purview the deserved work may fall. If an appropriate conception of social anthropology or linguistics; of semiotics or pragmatics; of communication theory or cybernetics can motivate and guide the research that is needed, all to the good. The main question is one of conveying and encouraging the contribution anthropology should make to its own and others' needs.

It is my belief that an appropriate conception of the general field of concern, under whatever term, must satisfy the following conditions. First, in regard to relations between linguistics and other systematic study of codes on the one hand, and ethnography as a more general concern on the other: (a) methodological congruity and continuity between the areas of analysis should be sought, as is the spirit of a growing amount of current ethnographic work; (b)

the specifics of communicative means and ends should be kept mutually in view; (c) the search for relations through looking out from the structures of codes should be seen as secondary to looking in from the structures of communities, events, personalities, and the like; (d) the gaps between the results of present analyses of codes and of contexts should be bridged by extending analysis to the patterning of codes in use, as texts and routines, and to the patterning of events as contexts for such use.

Second, in regard to theoretical orientations, there must be changes of emphasis and primacy with respect to a number of traits of thought about language characteristic of linguistics and anthropology in much of this century: (a) the structure, or system, of speech (*la parole*), rather than that of the linguistic code (*la langue*); (b) function as warranting structure rather than function as secondary or unattended; (c) the referential function in terms of which the structure of the linguistic code is usually approached as but one among a plurality of functions; (d) the different functions as warranting different structural perspectives and organizations; (e) the functions themselves to be warranted in ethnographic context, rather than postulated or ascribed; (f) diversity, not universal identity, of the functions of language and other communicative means; (g) the community or other context, rather than the code, as starting point; (h) the appropriateness of formal elements and messages, rather than their arbitrariness, to receive primary attention; (i) in general, the place, boundaries, and organization, of language, and other communicative means in a community to be taken as problematic. In short, emphasis and primacy of speech over code; function over structure; context over message; the ethnographically appropriate over the ethnologically arbitrary; but the interrelations always crucial, so that one can not only generalize the particularities, but also particularize the generalities.<sup>3</sup>

Beyond these requirements, experience suggests that work contributing to study of communication in an ethnographic spirit is likely not to duplicate similar work under the aegis of another disciplinary name. The close ties between ethnography and descriptive linguistics on the one hand, and between ethnography and the various perspectives of ethnology and social anthropology on the other; the practice of participant observation; and the values placed on the specifics of cultural life and the viewpoint of the other participants in the communication that is ethnography—such traits tend to ensure two distinguishing characteristics. There is likely to be a more egalitarian distribution of detailed interest among the components of communication. Not only the participants and the contents of messages, but also the structures, degrees of elaboration, distinctiveness, values and genres associated with channels, codes, message-forms and settings attract attention partly in their own right; the linguistic codes, as most explicit, and as indispensable, if not wholly adequate, avenues of access to other codes, and to the meanings of other components; specialized subcodes and marginal systems, techniques of speech disguise, languages of concealment, drum-languages, ceremonial speech; the channels, especially when complexly elaborated as in West Africa, or distinctively specialized, as writing for lovers'

communications among the Hanunóo; the forms of poetry and dramatic enactment; and so forth. Such aspects of communication are less likely to receive full due in studies whose concern with communication is with it not so much as a dimension of culture, and purposes of others, but as a problem of achieving, through situations and others, purposes of one's own. This leads to the second characteristic, that the cultural consequences of communication in historical and evolutionary terms, not only immediate effects on particular participants, are likely to be in view. With regard to particular participants, the anthropologist is likely to share the view that there are no such things as masses, but only ways of regarding people as masses; that one man's mass is another man's public, or community, and that to speak of mass communications is already to express a separateness from the portion of humanity concerned that prejudices the result (see Williams 1960:315-358). The anthropologist is likely to look at communication from the standpoint and interests of the local community itself, as well as from the outside, and see its members not as objects of persuasion and manipulation, but as potential sources of knowledge and insight. His work may willy-nilly facilitate efforts at persuasion and manipulation, but if it does, the modification of original intentions by the results of his work is likely to make the ensuing process more one of cooperation—one process of feedback begetting another.

In the short period since the pattern of the term adopted here was put forward, in the form of the "ethnography of speaking," there has seemed to be a responsiveness among anthropologists not elicited in my experience by such terms as "pragmatics" or hybrids off the parent stock of "-linguistics." It may be that this is an instance of what Williams (1960: 357) states in a more general context as the fact that "our vocabulary, the language we use to enquire into and negotiate our actions, is no secondary factor, but a practical and radical element in itself. To take a meaning from experience, and try to make it active, is in fact our process of growth." Perhaps to call a concern the ethnography of communication, rather than pragmatics, is for anthropologists no terminological quibble, but an active difference. Perhaps not. I reiterate: if an appropriate conception of social anthropology or linguistics, of semiotics or pragmatics, of communication theory or cybernetics, can motivate and guide the research that is needed, all to the good.

For the present, the paucity of adequate studies makes the primary need one not of a *a priori* theoretical elaboration, of which there has been a fair amount, but of sketching and conceptualizing a framework persuasive to the tasks at hand.

## VI

The present papers report concepts, methods, and kinds of studies now at hand. They cannot attempt a systematic exposition of the ethnography of communication, or of the theory it may help build. Too little systematic work has been done for such an exposition to be possible. Some over-all sketch is needed. however, as an indication of relations among various lines of work that does not otherwise emerge, and of some of the specific content a systematic theory

would comprise. In the sketch that follows I emphasize the needs and content of an ethnographic approach, and relations among anthropological interests. There are four aspects to be sketched, concerned, respectively, with (1) the components of communicative events, (2) the relations among components, (3) the capacity and state of components, and (4) the activity of the system so constituted. It is with respect to the third and fourth aspects that two topics prominently associated with the topic of communication, communication theory (in the sense of information theory), and cybernetics, find a place.

### *The Components of Communicative Events*

The starting point is the ethnographic analysis of the communicative habits of a community in their totality, determining what count as communicative events, and as their components, and conceiving no communicative behavior as independent of the set framed by some setting or implicit question. The communicative event thus is central. (In terms of language proper, the statement means that the linguistic code is displaced by the speech act as focus of attention.)

Some frame of reference is needed for consideration of the several kinds of components co-present in a communicative event. The logic or other superiority of one classification over another is not at issue. What is at issue is the provision of a useful guide in terms of which relevant features can be discerned—a provisional phonetics, as it were, not an *a priori* phonemics, of the communicative event.

For what has to be inventoried and related in an ethnographic account, a somewhat elaborated version of factors identified in communications theory, and adapted to linguistics by Roman Jakobson (1953;1960), can serve. Briefly put, (1,2) the various kinds of participants in communicative events—senders and receivers, addressors and addressees, interpreters and spokesmen, and the like; (3) the various available channels, and their modes of use, speaking, writing, printing, drumming, blowing, whistling, singing, face and body motion as visually perceived, smelling, tasting, and tactile sensation; (4) the various codes shared by various participants, linguistic, paralinguistic, kinesic, musical, and other; (5) the settings (including other communication) in which communication is permitted, enjoined, encouraged, abridged; (6) the forms of messages, and their genres, ranging verbally from single-morpheme sentences to the patterns and diacritics of sonnets, sermons, salesmen's pitches, and any other organized routines and styles; (7) the topics and comments that a message may be about; (8) the events themselves, their kinds and characters as wholes—all these must be identified in an adequate ethnographic way.

Ethnography here is conceived in reference to the various efforts of Conklin, Frake, Goodenough, Metzger, Romney, and others to advance the techniques of ethnographic work and to conceptualize its goal, such that the structural analysis of cultural behavior generally is viewed as the development of theories adequate to concrete cases, just as the structural analysis of behavior as manifestation of a linguistic code is viewed. One way to phrase the underlying outlook is

as a question of validity. Just as analysis of phonological capabilities must determine what set of phonological features is to be taken as relevant to identification and distinction of phonological sound on the part of the possessors of the capabilities in question, so analysis of cultural capabilities generally must determine what sets of features are to be taken as relevant to identification and contrast of cultural behavior on the part of the participants in same. (Sapir's "Sound Patterns in Language" [1925], seen as implying a general statement about the cultural aspect of behavior, remains classic and crucial to the development of anthropological thought in this regard, although it has taken a generation for its ethnographic import to become salient.) Another way to phrase the underlying outlook is as a question of the common element in the situation of ethnographer and person-in-the-culture. Each must formulate from finite experience theories adequate to predict and judge as appropriate or inappropriate what is in principle an infinite amount of cultural behavior. (Judgments of grammaticality are a special case.)

Mere observation, however, systematic and repeated, can obviously never suffice to meet such high standards of objectivity and validity. As Sapir once observed regarding a rule of avoidance among the Wishram Chinook:

Incidentally there is a lesson here for the theoretical ethnologist. If the avoidance of man and woman here were known only objectively it would present a situation resembling that, say, in Melanesia. One might suppose then the explanation to be that women were set apart from the man's social fabric because of the low esteem in which they were held, or that men avoided them because of their periodic impure state. Either guess would be a shot far wide of the mark. The moral is that it is as necessary to discover what the native sentiment is as well as to record the behavior.<sup>4</sup>

The point is essentially the same as that of "Sound Patterns of Language," from which stems the current distinction of "etic" and "emic." An "emic" account is one in terms of features relevant in the behavior in question; an etic account, however useful as a preliminary grid and input to an emic (structural) account, and as a framework for comparing different emic accounts, lacks the emic account's validity. The point is an old one in anthropology, only made more trenchant by the clarity with which the point can be made in terms of the contrast between phonetics and phonemics. (See Pike 1954 for coinage of the terms, and conscious development of the perspective from a linguistic basis beyond linguistics, under inspiration from Sapir.) Ethnographic objectivity is intersubjective objectivity, but in the first instance, the intersubjective objectivity in question is that of the participants in the culture. No amount of acoustic apparatus and sound spectrography can crack the phonemic code of a language, and a phonemic analysis, based on the intersubjective objectivity in the behavior of those who share the code, is the necessary basis for other studies, experimental and otherwise. (Cr. Hockett 1955:210-211; Lisker, Cooper, and Liberman 1962.) The same is true for the shared codes which constitute the mutual intelligibility of the rest of cultural behavior. The advantages of such an approach in providing a criterion against which to appraise participants' own explanations and conceptualizations of their behavior, their "home-made models," should be ob-

vious, as should the advantages in providing a basis for controlled comparison, study of diffusion, and any other generalizing or analyzing approach that depends in the last analysis on the adequacy and precision of ethnographic records of cultural behavior. (Ethnographic records, of course, may be of other things: censuses, for example.)

In a discussion of genealogical method, Conklin (1964:25-26), observing that all kinship data derive from ethnographic contexts, makes explicit his assumptions regarding the nature and purpose of ethnography (citing also Goodenough 1956, and noting Frake 1962b, 1964, and a previous article of his own [1962]). The statement applies to communicative data as well as to kinship data, and can be adopted here:

An adequate ethnography is here considered to include the culturally significant arrangement of productive statements about the relevant relationships obtaining among locally defined categories and contexts (of objects and events) within a given social matrix. These nonarbitrarily ordered statements should comprise, essentially, a cultural grammar (Goodenough 1957a; Frake 1962a). In such an ethnography, the emphasis is placed on the interpretation, evaluation, and selection of alternative statements about a particular set of cultural activities within a given range of social contexts. This in turn leads to the critical examination of intracultural relations and ethnotheoretical models (Conklin 1955; Goodenough ms.). Demonstrable intracultural validity for statements of covert and abstracted relationships should be based on prior analysis of particular and generalized occurrences in the ethnographic record (Lounsbury 1955:163-164, 1956; cf. Morris 1946). Criteria for evaluating the adequacy of ethnographic statements with reference to the cultural phenomena described, include: (1) productivity (in terms of appropriate anticipation if not actual prediction); (2) replicability or testability; and (3) economy. In actual field situations, recording activities, analytic operations, and evaluative procedures (in short, the application of ethnographic technique, method, and theory) can, and I think should, be combined. The improvement and constant adjustment of field recording is, in fact, dependent upon simultaneous analysis and evaluation.

Notice that strict conception of ethnography constrains the conception of communication that is admissible. Just as what counts as phonemic feature or religious act cannot be identified in advance, so with what counts as a communicative event. There are, of course, general criteria for phonemic and for communicative status; it is a question of the phenomena by which they are satisfied in a given case. If one examines the writings of anthropologists and linguists, one finds that general conceptions of communicative status vary, sometimes in ways at variance with the conception of ethnography adopted here.

The concept of message would seem to suffice as starting point for any conception, if one grants two kinds of things. The first is that the concept of message implies the sharing (real or imputed) of (1) a code or codes in terms of which the message is intelligible to (2) participants, minimally an addressor and addressee (who may be the same person), in (3) an event constituted by its transmission and characterized by (4) a channel or channels, (5) a setting or context, (6) a definite form or shape to the message, and (7) a topic and comment, i.e., that it says something about something—in other words, that the concept of message implies the array of components previously given. The second is that what can count as instances of messages, and as instances of the components of the event constituted by the transmission of a message, must be



determined in the given case along the lines of the ethnographic approach just discussed and just characterized by Conklin.

If one accepts the latter point, then some anthropological conceptions of communication must be judged to exclude too much, or to include too much, or, occasionally, both. To take first the problem of excluding too much, one cannot *a priori* define the sound of approaching footsteps (Sapir 1921:3) or the setting of the sun (Hockett 1958:574) as not communicative. Their status is entirely a question of their construal by a receiver. In general, no phenomenon can be defined in advance as never to be counted as constituting a message. Consider a case related by Hallowell (1964:64:

An informant told me that many years before he was sitting in a tent one afternoon during a storm, together with an old man and his wife. There was one clap of thunder after another. Suddenly the old man turned to his wife and asked, "Did you hear what was said?" "No," she replied, "I didn't catch it." My informant, an acculturated Indian, told me he did not at first know what the old man and his wife referred to. It was, of course, the thunder. The old man thought that one of the Thunder Birds had said something to him. He was reacting to this sound in the same way as he would respond to a human being, whose words he did not understand. The casualness of the remark and even the trivial character of the anecdote demonstrate the psychological depth of the "social relations" with other-than-human beings that becomes explicit in the behavior of the Ojibwa as a consequence of the cognitive "set" induced by their culture.

There are manifold instances from cultures around the world, e.g., to take a recent report, the drinking, questioning and answering in which Amahuaca men are joined by the class of supernaturals known as *yoshi* associated interestingly enough with a specific form of chant and use of the vocal channel (vocal chords tightly constricted) (Carneiro 1964:8). Hallowell's account of the Ojibwa concept of person shows with particular depth the implications of cultural values and world view for occurrences of communicative behavior. As indication of the contribution a conscious ethnography of communication, focused on occurrences of activity such as speech, might make to such anthropological concerns as world view, let me cite one other Ojibwa instance and Hallowell's interpolated regret: Having discussed the fact that stones as classified grammatically as animate in gender, and are conceived as potentially capable of animate behavior, especially in ceremonially-linked circumstances, Hallowell records (1964:56):

A white trader, digging in his potato patch, unearthed a large stone similar to the one just referred to. He sent for John Duck, an Indian who was the leader of the *wábano*, a contemporary ceremony that is held in a structure something like that used for the Midewiwin (a major ceremony during which stones occasionally had animate properties such as movement and opening of a mouth). The trader called his attention to the stone, saying that it must belong to his pavilion. John Duck did not seem pleased at this. He bent down and spoke to the boulder in a low voice, inquiring whether it had ever been in his pavilion. According to John the stone replied in the negative.

It is obvious that John Duck spontaneously structured the situation in terms that are intelligible within the context of Ojibwa language and culture. . . . I regret that my field notes contain no information about the use of direct verbal address in the other cases mentioned (movement of stone, opening of a mouth). But it may well have taken place. In the anecdote describing John Duck's behavior, however, his use of speech as a mode of communication raises the animate status of the boulder to the level of social interaction common to human beings. Simply as a matter of observation we can say that the stone was treated *as if* it were a "person," not a "thing," without inferring that objects of this class are, for the Ojibwa, necessarily conceptualized as persons.

The question of the boundaries of the speech community, and indeed, of how many speech communities within a community there are, becomes problematic from a strict ethnographic viewpoint. Ordinarily the question of the speech community of the Wishram Chinook would be discussed as a question as to whether or not the objective linguistic differences (few) between the Wishram village and that of the Wasco across the river, and perhaps those of others down the river, sufficed to constitute separate dialects, or only one. On the basis of Wishram culture, however, an ethnographic approach must recognize three speech communities within the Wishram village itself. One such community consisted of normal adults and children past babyhood; a second comprised babies, dogs, coyotes, and guardian spirits Dog and Coyote, and, possibly, old people possessing those guardian spirits; a third comprised those whose guardian spirit experience had granted them the power of being able to interpret the language of the spirits.<sup>5</sup>

If the strict ethnographic approach requires us to extend the concept of communication to the boundaries granted it by participants of a culture, it also makes it necessary to restrict it to those boundaries. To define communication as the triggering of a response (as Hockett [1958:573] has done, and Kluckhohn [1961:895] has accepted), is to make the term so nearly equivalent to behavior and interaction in general as to lose its specific value as a scientific and moral conception. There are many illustrations possible of actions that trigger response and are not taken as communicative by one or both participants. As an act clearly based on the triggering of response (in another or oneself), sexual intercourse would be an ideal event to test this point; what part, less than all, of triggering of response is sent or received as communication? Again, it is desirable to treat the transmission or receipt of information as not the same as, but a more general category than, communication, the latter being treated as a more specific sphere, necessarily either participated in or constituted by persons (cf. Cherry 1961:247, note). The sound of footsteps or the setting of the sun may be taken as a source of information without being taken as a message (although in either case a receiver may interpret the event as a message).

From this standpoint, genes may transmit information, but the process is communicative only from the standpoint of, and as reported by, an observer and interpreter. For the human observer to report and treat the process experienced or inferred as a communicative one is of course a right not to be challenged, for, formally, it is the same right that the ethnographer accepts when acted upon by an Ojibwa, Wishram, or other participant in a culture. The formal feature is that the evidence for the communicative event is a report by one who did not participate in it as either addressor or addressee. Such reported events ( $E^n$ , or narrated events, in Roman Jakobson's symbolization [1957] for the constituents of speech events) are common in myth, for example, and are of course of considerable importance, as when the origin of the world is so described by the ancient Hebrews, or the origin of death explained by the Wishram in a narrative culminating (as is typical for their myths) in an announcement ordaining how that aspect of cultural life is to be and what people will say in its regard.

We deal here, in short, with the fact that the communicative event is the metaphor, or perspective, basic to rendering experience intelligible. It is likely to be employed at any turn, if with varying modes of imputation of reality (believed, supposed, entertained in jest, etc.). It is this fact that underlies the apparently central role of language in cultural life. Of codes available to human beings, language, as the one more than any other capable at once of being explicitly detailed and transcendent of single contexts, is the chief beneficiary under many circumstances of the primary centrality of communication. Under some circumstances, of course, it is not.

In general, any and all of the components of a communicative event, and the occurrence of a message itself, can be imputed by one who adopts the standpoint of an addressor, addressee, or receiver as observer. One consequence is the point already made, that the ethnographic observer must do more than observe to prevent his own habits of imputation from interfering with recognition of where and what participants in another culture impute. Another consequence, since persons can impute either an addressor and intent or an addressee and attention, is to make heuristically useful for ethnographic purposes a characterization of a communicative event as one in which to the observer one at least of the participants is real.

The identification of communicative events and their components has been dwelt on, because it is least the focus of the papers presented here, and is indeed seldom treated, except incidentally, in most writing relevant to ethnography. The discussion so far has been concerned with gross identification of events as such and of components individually. In point of fact, adequate determination usually will involve more than inventory of channels, setting, etc. The structures of relations among different events, and their components; the capabilities and states of the components; the activity of the system which is the event; all will be involved. Explication of genres of verbal art, once such have been identified (e.g., Ssukung Tu 1963),<sup>6</sup> commonly involves appeal at least to relations among components, and often to their states and activity. Such questions comprise the other aspects of the frame of reference being sketched, and to these we now turn.

### *Relations Among Components*

In one sense, the focus of the present approach is on communities organized as systems of communicative events. Such an object of study can be regarded as part of, but not identical with, an ethnography as a whole.<sup>7</sup> One way in which to indicate that there is a system, either in the community or in the particular event, is to observe that there is not complete freedom of co-occurrence among components. Not all imaginably possible combinations of participants, channels, codes, topics, etc., can occur.

It is to the structure of relations among components that much of the surge of work in sociolinguistics is directed. The papers by Ervin-Tripp and Gumperz are exemplary in this respect, and suggest the richness of the subject. Bernstein can be said to explore in depth the consequences of certain structures of relations,

while Labov explores correlations, and patterns of change in the correlations, between speakers, hearers, settings, and features of the code, correlations and changes that can be of considerable consequence. All the papers exemplify such relations to some extent, including that by Ferguson, which is concerned primarily with a marginal part of the code component. (Notice that focus on relations among components more readily invites description and comparative analysis of the variety of such marginal systems than does focus on the code alone. Also, more generally, it leads into description and comparison of whatever may characterize such an event or relationship, e.g., talk to babies, whether or not special features characterize it from the standpoint of the code as such. It is equally important to know the characteristics to talk to babies in societies where "baby talk" is eschewed. With regard to message-form, there is much to be discovered and described in the sequential patterning of speech as routines, specialized to certain relationships.)

Ervin-Tripp suggests that the structures of relations with respect to language will prove to be specific in some ways, to be more than illustration of more general sociological or psychological or cultural notions. The same is likely to prove true for each of the kinds of codes employed in a community. The heuristic assumption is that their separate maintenance implies some specific role for each which is not wholly duplicated by any other (including language). On the other hand, studies focused on the relations among components of communicative events are likely to discern patterns general to them, but partly independent of, and cutting across, the other departments of study into which the events might be cast ethnographically. Once looked for, areal styles, in the use of specific codes, and areal communicative styles generally, are likely to be found. Lomax (1959) has suggested such for musical performance, and Melville Jacobs has suggested such may be the case for the dramatic performances that enact myths.

It is especially important to notice that delineations of communities in these respects are crucial to understanding of the place of language in culture, and to understanding of the particular place of language in culture signalled by what is commonly called the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. To assume that differences in language shape or interact with differences in world view is to assume that the functional role of language in relation to world view is everywhere the same. Indeed, anthropological thought quite generally has tended to assume identity or equivalence of function for language throughout the world (see discussion in Hymes 1961; 1962; ms. a).

When a particular code is considered but one component of communicative events, the studies of the structure of communicative events in a society will provide detailed evidence on the differential ways in which the code enters into communicative purposes and cultural life. The different ways and stages in which a language enters into enculturation, transmission of adult roles and skills, interaction with the supernatural, personal satisfactions, and the like will appear. Languages, like other cultural traits, will be found to vary in the degree and nature of their integration into the societies and cultures in which they occur. It will be possible to focus on the consequences of such differences for acculturation

and adaptation of both languages and peoples. Such information has been brought to attention in studies of acculturation, bilingualism, and standard languages. What is necessary is to realize that the functional relativity of languages is general, applying to monolingual situations too.

With particular regard to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, it is essential to notice that Whorf's sort of linguistic relativity is secondary, and dependent upon a primary sociolinguistic relativity, that of differential engagement of languages in social life. For example, description of a language may show that it expresses a certain cognitive style, perhaps implicit metaphysical assumptions, but what chance the language has to make an impress upon individuals and behavior will depend upon the degree and pattern of its admission into communicative events. The case is clear in bilingualism; we do not expect a Bengali using English as a fourth language for certain purposes of commerce to be influenced deeply in world view by its syntax. What is necessary is to realize that the monolingual situation is problematic as well. Peoples do not all everywhere use language to the same degree, in the same situations, or for the same things; some peoples focus upon language more than others. Such differences in the place of a language in the communicative system of a people cannot be assumed to be without influence on the depth of a language's influence on such things as world view.

More particularly, if a language is taken as a device for categorizing experience, it is not such a device in the abstract. There remains the question of what may be the set of events in which categorizing dependent upon the language occurs. (The set includes events in which a single person is using a language excoigatively.) Although anthropologists have sometimes talked of the use of language "merely" as a tool of communication, and of the categorizing of experience as if it were a superior category, the role of a language as a device for categorizing experience and its role as an instrument of communication cannot be so separated, and indeed, the latter includes the former. This is the more true when a language, as is often the case, affords alternative ways of categorizing the same experience, so that the patterns of selection among such alternatives must be determined in actual contexts of use—as must also, indeed, the degree to which a language is being used as a full-fledged semantic instrument (as distinct from its use as an expressive, directive, etc., instrument) at all in a given case.

Such considerations broach the third aspect of our frame of reference.

### *Capacity and State of Components*

So far we have considered the identification of events and components, and the structures of relations among them. Now we must consider their capacities, or capabilities, and states. It is here that "communication theory," in the sense in which the term is equivalent to "information theory," enters, with its concern for the measurement of capacity. Although associated primarily with the capacity of channels and codes, the underlying notion extends equally to all components of a communicative event, and to the events of a system.

Questions of capability can be broached in terms of focus upon some one of the components of an event (or the event itself) in relation to all other components in turn. Some topics of long-standing anthropological interest find a place here. The relation of language to environment, both natural and social, in the sense of elaboration of a code's capacity, especially via vocabulary, to deal with snow, cattle, status, etc., as topics, is one. Another is the relationship between the capability of a code, and the capabilities of its users, in the sense of the Whorfian concern with habitual behavior and fashions of speaking. In both cases there must be reference from the start to the distribution in use of the portion of the code in question, both among communicative events and in relation to their other components. (The necessity of this has been argued for the Whorfian problem above; on cultural focus, elaboration of vocabulary, and folk-taxonomy of semantic domains, cf. the views on dependence on context of situation of Brown [1958:255-258], Frake [1961:121-122], Gluckman [1959], Meillet [1906], and Service [1960].)

With regard to participants, differential competence and performance are salient concerns of Bernstein's analysis of elaborated and restricted codes. Gumperz' concept of verbal repertoire also singles out a participant's capabilities in relation to the code component. Albert and Frake touch upon the subject with regard to special forms of usage. Code-switching, ability to translate, range of dialects or levels or socially advantageous routines at command, are familiar examples. John Roberts (ms.) has undertaken ingenious studies of capacity with respect to communicative tasks. Often this level and the preceding one are but faces of the same coin, the formal structure of relations being grounded culturally in judgments (and facts) as to capability, and circumstances as to capability being dependent upon the structures of relations.

The ethnography of communication deals in an empirical and comparative way with many notions that underlie linguistic theory proper. This is particularly so when linguistic theory depends upon notions such as those of "speech community," "speech act," and "fluent speaker." How varied the capabilities of speakers can be in even a small and presumably homogeneous tribe is sketched incisively by Bloomfield (1927) in a paper that deserves to be classic for its showing that such variation, including possibilities of grammatical mistake, is universal. The range and kind of abilities speakers and hearers show is an area largely unexplored by ethnographers and linguists, but one of great import both to cultural and linguistic theory. (I have tried to draw some implications of a focus on the concept of speakers' abilities in another paper [Hymes 1964b].)<sup>8</sup>

Capacity varies with event, and with the states in which participants, channels, etc., may be in the event, including the values and beliefs of participants, as properties of their states that help constitute events as communicative, and that determine other properties. Here Albert's paper illustrates possibilities of approach. In part the question is one not of what a language does for and to participants, their personalities, culture, and the like, but of what participants, their personalities, and the like, do for and to a language.

Only by reference to the state of participants, moreover, does it seem possi-

ble to introduce in a natural way the various types of functions which communicative events may serve for them.

There has been a bias in American linguistics, and in American extensions of linguistic methodology, favoring a "surface-level" approach that stresses identification and segmentation of overt material, and hesitates to venture far into inner structural relations and ascription of purpose. (The bias perhaps reflects the favoring of visual over acoustic space, the trust of the eye, not the ear, that Carpenter and McLuhan [1960:65-70] find characteristic of our society.) In Kenneth Burke's terms, there has been a tendency to treat language and its use as matters of "motion" (as if of the purely physical world), rather than as matters of "action" (as matters of the human, dramatic world of symbolic agency and purpose). With all the difficulties that notions of purpose and function entail, there seems no way for the structural study of language and communication to engage its subject in social life in any adequate, useful way, except by taking this particular bull by the horns (cf. the introductory discussion in Hall's paper). The purposes, conscious and unconscious, the functions, intended and unintended, perceived and unperceived, of communicative events for their participants are here treated as questions of the states in which they engage in them, and of the norms by which they judge them. (Those aspects of purpose and function that have to do with feedback, exchange, response to violations of norms, and the like, are considered with the fourth aspect of the present frame of reference, that of the activity of the system.)

For ethnographic purposes, an initial "etic grid" for delineating and "notating" possible types of functions is needed, and it does seem possible to provide one, by considering the possibilities of focus upon each component in turn in relation to each of the others. The grid so derived has proven adequate to accommodate the various schemes of functions, and of functional types of messages, which have come to my attention. Ethnographic work will of course test and probably enlarge and revise it, just as experience of additional languages has enlarged and revised phonetic charts. Literary, philosophical, and other schemes of functions, and of functional types of messages, are also useful as sources of insight and details. (It may prove desirable to undertake a comparative and historical analysis of such schemes, as "home-made models" from our own culture. Among reviews, note Schaff 1962, Part 2, and Stern 1931, Ch. II.)

It must be kept in mind that functions may prove specific to individuals and cultures, and that they require specific identification and labeling in any case, even when subsumable under broad types. The "etic grid" serves only to help perceive kinds of functions that may be present, and possibly to facilitate comparison.

*Focus on the addressor* or sender in relation to other components entails such types of function as identification of the source, expression of attitude toward one or another component or toward the event as a whole, excogitation (thinking aloud), etc. Such functions may be of course intended, attributed, conscious, unconscious. *Focus on the addressee* or other receiver entails such types of function as identification of the destination, and the ways in which the message

and event may be governed by anticipation of the attitude of the destination. Persuasion, appeal, rhetoric, and direction enter here, including as well the sense in which the characteristics of the addressee govern the other aspects of the event as a matter of protocol. Effects on receivers may be of course intended, attributed, conscious, unconscious, achieved, frustrated. *Focus on channels* in relation to other components entails such functions as have to do with maintenance of contact and control of noise, both physical and psychological in both cases. *Focus on codes* in relation to other components entails such functions as are involved in learning, analysis, devising of writing systems, checking on the identity of an element of the code use in conversation, and the like. *Focus on settings* in relation to other components entails all that is considered contextual, apart from the event itself, in that any and all components may be taken as defining the setting of the event, not just its location in time and space. Such context has two aspects, verbal and nonverbal from the standpoint of speech, kinesic and nonkinesic from the standpoint of body motion, and, generally, for any one code or modality, context constituted for a message by other messages within the same code or modality, as distinct from context constituted by all other facets of the event. *Focus on message-form* in relation to other components entails such functions as proof-reading, mimicry, aspects of emendation and editing, and poetic and stylistic concerns. *Focus on topic* in relation to other components entails functions having to do with reference (in the sense both of linguistic meaning proper and denotation) and content. *Focus on the event* itself entails whatever is comprised under metacommunicative types of function. If the message is taken as subsuming all, or all the immediately relevant, other components, then focus on the message as surrogate of the whole event may be taken as entailing metacommunicative functions ("the message 'this is play'"; Russell's types, etc.; see Bateson 1963 on the importance of this function).

Common broad types of functions associated with each type of focus can be variously labelled: expressive, directive, contact (phatic), metalinguistic, contextual, poetic (stylistic), referential, and metacommunicative are useful. The etic framework implied here can be handled with pencil and paper for visual purposes (and expanded also) by two devices, one of horizontal placement, one of vertical placement, of components relative to each other. In handling the five broad types of components of action used in his analysis (Scene, Act, Agent, Agency, Purpose), Burke devises various "ratios"; thus, the relation of Scene to Act is the Scene-Act ratio, and can be represented as if a numerator over a denominator: Scene/Act (Burke 1945). In explicating grammatical categories in terms of the components of speech events, Jakobson (1957) discriminates speech events ( $E^s$ ) and narrated events ( $E^n$ ), and participants in each ( $P^s$ ,  $P^n$ ), expressing relations with a diagonal; thus, the relation of the narrated event to the speech event (involved in verbal categories) is expressed  $E^n/E^s$ . Either device could be used to express all the possible combinations and permutations of focus upon the relation of one component of a communicative event to each of the others. Either device is useful in explicating other logical and empirical schemes of functions and functional types of messages in terms of a common



denominator, a problem which is a converse in effect of the usual problem of componential analysis. (There one proceeds from etic grid to discover an emic system, here one is concerned to proceed from a possibly emic system to discover an etic grid.)

Most of the functions and components noted above have been discussed with examples of Jakobson 1960 and Hymes 1962.

### *Activity of the System*

Information theory is one topic notably associated with communication; cybernetics is the other. Having taken information theory in its quantitative sense as pertaining to the third aspect of the present frame of reference, we take cybernetics as pertaining to the fourth. Studies concerned with the information theory aspect of ethnographic systems of communication are almost nonexistent, and the case is the same for studies concerned with the cybernetic aspect. One can think in both respects of work by John Roberts that should become far better known than it is (note his forthcoming book, *Four Southwestern Men*), and of a few celebrated and isolated examples in the work of Levi-Strauss (1953) and Bateson (1949; 1958) where cybernetic notions are applied.<sup>9</sup>

Apart from its discussion by Hall, cybernetics does not enter overtly into the papers presented here, which are largely concerned with the need to develop more limited empirical and analytical contributions. Nevertheless, the activity of systems of communication and of communicative events is involved in much of the work they represent. Most salient, perhaps, is the concern with the conduct of selves and of gatherings in the work from which Goffman's paper stems. Notice also Bernstein's attention to the workings of different types of codes, and Gumperz' delineation of personal and transactional modes of switching, with regard to the linguistic dimension of interaction, as well as the dynamic aspect of the shifts of language with topic that Ervin-Tripp treats. Frake sketches dynamics of Subanon drinking activity, and Albert gives notable Burundi examples of speech behavior as a system of action. Labov touches upon the specific courses of linguistic evolution, which of course involve the activity of systems of communication; and Malkiel models a case of such involvement as an illustration of glottodynamics.

The activity of the system is the most general aspect of the four, and ultimately the one in terms of which it is necessary to view the rest. For particular purposes, of course, any one aspect, or part of one, can be segregated for analysis, and there is much to be done in the ethnographic and comparative study of every aspect and component. To take the channel component as an illustration, there are few if any ethnographic studies to compare with Herzog's multi-faceted account of the system of channels elaborated among the Jabo of Liberia, considering, as it does, the structure of the code in each, the relation of code and messages in each to base messages in speech, native categories and conceptions, social correlates, and circumstances of use (Herzog 1945). There is a fair variety of reports of specialized uses of the vocal channel, but the account of Mazateco whistle talk by Cowan (1948) again is almost unique in pro-

viding a technical linguistic base and ethnographic context that could support controlled comparison. We have noted that paralinguistic and kinesic investigations have but begun to be extended cross-culturally, and attention to the sociopsychological context of attitude toward use of a channel, or modality, such as voice and gesture, such as Devereux (1949, 1951) has shown in work with the Mohave, is far to seek. The two recent general comparative studies (May 1956, Stern 1957) look toward historical interpretation in terms of distribution and origins, but not toward controlled comparison of structures and functions, perhaps because the available data offers little encouragement. Stern's classification of speech surrogates, derived from notions of communication theory, needs clarification and extension to include writing systems, which are logically comprised by the categories. As for the structural and functional aspects of writing and literacy, empirical studies of the diversity of the patterns that occur are few, and as for contrastive studies of their absence, that of Bloomfield (1927) is the only one known to me. Interpretations of the determinism of particular channels, such as those of McLuhan (1962) and of Goody and Watt (1963), and interpretations of the determinism of media (channels) generally, such as are expressed in the orientation of Carpenter and McLuhan (1960) and McLuhan (1964), interesting as they are, seem oversimplified, where not simply wrong, in the light of what little ethnographic base we have. There is a tendency to take the value of a channel as given across cultures, but here, as with every aspect and component of communication, the value is problematic and requires investigation. (Consider for example the specialization of writing to courtship among young people by the Hanunoo, and to a borrowed religion among the Aleut; and the complex and diverse profiles with regard to the role of writing in society, and in individual communicative events, for traditional Chinese, Korean, and Japanese cultures, with regard both to the Chinese texts shared by all and to the materials specific to each.) To provide a better ethnographic basis for the understanding of the place of alternative channels and modalities in communication is indeed one of the greatest challenges to studies of the sort we seek to encourage. At the same time, such work, whether on channels or some other aspect and component, profits from taking into account the complete context of the activity of the system of communication of the community as a whole.

It is with this aspect that the ethnographic study of communication makes closest contact with the social, political, and moral concerns with communication, conceived as value and a determinant in society and in personal lives.

## VII

The frame of reference just sketched can be summed up as asking a series of questions: What are the communicative events, and their components, in a community? What are the relationships among them? What capabilities and states do they have, in general, and in particular cases? How do they work?

The papers that follow indicate only some of the variety of anthropological and linguistic lines of work that can contribute to ethnographic study of communication. Some of the other work can be briefly mentioned. Just as with the

papers that follow, the general point is that they contribute to the empirical and analytical basis, and can gain from the theoretical perspective, of the ethnography of communication.

Among general methodological trends, one each in ethnography and linguistics should be singled out. In addition to the ethnographic work already mentioned, that of Metzger and Williams is a prime example of work, not concerned primarily with communication, that makes a contribution to its understanding through precision of focus and detail. From one of their accounts (1963:218-219, 227-228), for example, one could determine the place of speech in the hierarchy of ritual means of the community in question for controlled comparison with other cases. Their ethnographic method results in detail specified at the levels of the components of communicative events and of the interrelations. In complementary fashion, linguistic work concerned with the abilities and judgments of appropriateness on the part of native speakers that generative grammar brings into focus can contribute to the third and fourth aspects of the communicative ethnography. Such notions, pursued fully, lead into full scale studies focused on the full range of factors conditioning the exercise of judgment and ability.

There is perhaps a convergence between the professional field of speech and linguistics in the increased interest of the former in behavioral approaches, and of the latter in poetics and logic. It ought to be the part of anthropology to contribute to a truly comparative poetics, logic, and rhetoric, and what perhaps distinguishes the ethnography of communication as a perspective from sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics, as commonly conceived, is its inclusion of such humanistic subjects. If it can encourage the trend in folklore to the joint study of the structures of codes, messages, and performances, there will be mutual benefit.

There are a number of other particular lines of study where mutual benefit can result. The study of folk taxonomies, and of ethnographic semantics generally, needs specification of communicative contexts if it is to achieve the implicit goal of discovering the structure of vocabularies as wholes. (See argument in Hymes 1964a.) The methods of ethnographic semantics, in turn, are needed in discovering the components of communicative events. A like relationship holds with the work of observation and participation characteristic of paralinguistics, kinesics, and other aspects of the discovery of codes additional to language in the presentation of self in everyday life. (Note most recently Hockett 1960; Pittenger, Hockett, Danehy 1960; and Sebeok 1964.) Ethnographic and comparative studies in the context of communication are needed to extend the etic frameworks, and to ascertain emic relevance amidst the wealth of data even a few minutes can supply. In turn, these investigations are needed to delimit the place and interrelations of individual modalities, such as spoken language, in the communicative hierarchy of a community, and as a basis for understanding the evolution of communication (Birdwhistell 1960).

The potential richness of studies of socialization, enculturation, child development, etc., is manifest. There is here a situation analogous to that with re-

gard to the description of adult verbal behavior. Studies focused on the linguistic code as such need extension to concern with the whole of the child's induction in the communicative economy of its community. (Some notes and queries as to the child's induction are indicated in Hymes 1962; 1964c.) Such studies are beginning to appear (e.g., John 1963; 1964). The importance of concern with the child is partly that it is a favorable vantage point for discovering the adult system, and that it poses neatly one way in which the ethnography of communication is a distinctive enterprise—i.e., an enterprise concerned with what abilities the child must acquire beyond those of producing and interpreting all grammatical sentences in order to be a competent member of its community, knowing not only what may be said, but also what should and should not be said, and when and where.

There is a growing extension of interest among philosophical analysts from meanings of words and sentences to speech acts and empirical modes of language use. Studies of the ethnography of communication offer empirical testing grounds for the adequacy of logical analyses of rational communication (Harrah 1963), types of acts such as promises (Searle 1962), and of modes of use such as metaphor. In turn, ethnography cannot but benefit from additional precision of concepts for etic and typological purposes.

Work in fundamental education and literacy raises problems of particular interest, and can be both a source of empirical data and insight, and a practical area to which ethnographic studies of communication can contribute. Just as there may be interference in the speech of bilinguals, or in the perception of those mastering another code, due to carryover of linguistic patterns already acquired, so there may be interference in the communicative conduct of bilinguals and newcomers to a community, due to carryover of sociolinguistic or communicative patterns already acquired. (Hall [1959] provides a good account of some factors, and his paper in this volume is similarly concerned; on a cognitive aspect, see the forthcoming study by Roberts [ms.].) The various purposes of educators, workers in literacy, translators, missionaries, and applied anthropologists may be facilitated on occasion by prior ethnographic study of the local communicative economy, as may the purposes of teachers in our own society (here should be cited current work in Great Britain of Michael Halliday, Angus McIntosh, J. Catford, and others).

To the study of mental health in its communicative aspect, an ethnographic approach may contribute the expected anthropological perspective on comparative range, and on what is social in the given case, against which personal departure can be assessed (cf. Sapir 1927; Ruesch 1961).

The problems of the study of primate communication are in principle the same as those of the ethnographic study of communication in human communities. The importance of studies of primate and animal communication to help determine, by comparison and contrast, the distinctive properties of human language, and to help picture its evolutionary emergence, has gained new recognition in recent years (e.g., Sebeok 1962 and the various presentations by Hockett, cited and summarized in Hockett and Ascher 1964). Ethnographies of communi-

cation here play a complementary role, which has yet to gain recognition, since it tends to be assumed that the functions and uses of human language are constant and already adequately known. Empirical questions as to such things as the minimum role that a language can play in the communicative system of a small hunting and gathering society, and of the adequacy of minimal codes in close-knit communities, are not taken into account. Extrapolations as to the relations between code and communicative context at stages of human evolution, however, of the sort attempted by Hockett and Ascher (1964), need a basis in comparative ethnography (cf. Bartholomew and Birdsell 1953) as well as in the comparison of codes. (See discussion in Hymes 1964a: 105-106.) Not codes alone, but whole systems of communication, involving alternative modalities and specific needs, must be considered and compared. The reciprocal gain to ethnography from studies of ethnology and animal communication is indicated here by Hall's paper.

To the evolutionary approach to culture, ethnographic studies of communication can contribute a framework within which languages can be treated adaptively in ways which articulate with the study of cultural evolution as a whole, and with microevolutionary studies of individual cases (cf. Hymes 1961, 1964a).

Most of what can now be sketched is but an outline of a future in which, one can hope, ethnographic studies of communication will be commonplace, and an ethnographic perspective on the engagement of language in human life will be the standard from which more specialized studies depart.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> To Susan Ervin-Tripp, John Gumperz, Michael Halliday, Sydney Lamb, Sheldon Sacks, and Dan Slobin, I am indebted for warm discussions of language and its social study; to Bob Scholte and Erving Goffman, for pointed argument as to the notion of communication; to Harold Conklin, Charles Frake, Ward Goodenough, Floyd Lounsbury, and William C. Sturtevant, for discussion through several years of the nature of ethnography. To all much thanks and no blame.

<sup>2</sup> The relationship of the ethnography of communication to the field of semiotics, to which it can be said technically to belong, is taken up in part V of this introduction.

<sup>3</sup> I have elaborated some of the notions in this section and the next in other papers (Hymes 1961, 1962, 1964a, 1964b). Where this paper differs from the others in conception, it takes precedence.

<sup>4</sup> Spier and Sapir (1930: 217, n. 97). The point and the language indicate that the comment is due particularly to Sapir. The Wishram avoidance is due to the severe punishment, even death, visited for constructive adultery, which offense may be attributed in some circumstances even for private conversation or physical contact.

<sup>5</sup> With regard to the first and second communities, babyhood lasted "until they could talk clearly" (Spier and Sapir 1930: 218)—in Wishram, of course. With regard to the second, "Such guardian spirits could understand the language of babies. They maintain that a dog, a coyote, and an infant can understand each other, but the baby loses his language when he grows old enough to speak and understand the tongue of his parents" (*ibid.*: 255). With regard to the third, the group may have been individuated into various dyadic relationships between particular persons and spirits, for the example is given as "For instance, one who had gained the protection of Coyote could tell, on hearing a coyote's howl, what person was

going to die" (*ibid.*: 239). The matter would depend on information, probably now unobtainable, as to whether the language of the spirits was common to all of them.

<sup>6</sup>The classical writer Ssukung Tu discriminated 24 modes, translated as Grand Mode, Unemphatic, Ornate, Grave, Lofty, Polished, Refined, Vigorous, Exquisite, Spontaneous, Pregnant, Untrammelled, Evocative, Well-knit, Artless, Distinctive, Devious, Natural, Poignant, Vivid, Transcendent, Ethereal, Light-hearted, Flowing (Ssukung Tu, as translated [1963] with accompanying discussion by Wu Tiao-kung, "Ssukung Tu's poetic criticism," 78-83).

<sup>7</sup>Notice Conklin (1962:199): "An adequate ethnographic description of the culture (Goodenough 1957a) of a particular society presupposes a detailed analysis of the communications system and of the culturally defined situations in which all relevant distinctions in that system occur."

<sup>8</sup>The term "capability" is used with conscious reference to Tylor's definition of culture (or civilization) as all those capabilities acquired by man in society (1873:1). I subscribe to the view that what is distinctively cultural as an aspect of behavior or things is a question of capabilities acquired, or elicited, in social life, not a question of the extent to which the behavior or things themselves are socially shared. The point is like that made by Sapir (1916:425) with regard to similarity due to diffusion, namely, that its difference from similarity due to independent retention of a common heritage is one of degree rather than of kind, since the currency of a culture element in a single community is already an instance of diffusion that has radiated out, at last analysis, from a single individual. Sapir's point converges with the focus of generative grammatical theory on the individual's ability to produce and interpret novel, yet acceptable, sentences. The frequency and spread of a trait is important, but secondary, so far as the criteria for its being a product of cultural behavior, as having a cultural aspect, are concerned. A sonnet, for example, is such a product, whether or not it survives the moment of completion. In the course of the conduct of much cultural behavior, including verbal behavior, it will not be known, or will be problematic to the participants, whether or not some of what occurs and is accepted as cultural, has in fact ever previously occurred. For many typical anthropological problems, it is essential to single out for study cultural behavior that is shared to the limits of a community, or as nearly so as possible. For other problems, a group, family, person, or the *ad hoc* productivity of adaptation to an event, will be the desired focus. To restrict the concept of the cultural to something shared to the limits of a community is an arbitrary limitation on understanding, both of human beings and of the cultural. The viewpoint sketched here has the same fulcrum as that of Sapir's "Why Cultural Anthropology Needs the Psychiatrist" (1938), but Sapir's insights need not imply his virtual reduction of cultural behavior to psychiatric subject matter.

<sup>9</sup>Goodenough (1957b) introduces communication theory in the Shannon sense into his critical review of an anthropological book on communication (Keesing and Keesing 1956) that does not itself make use of such theory.

<sup>10</sup>Verbal means are more pervasive than tactile means, but a tactile means, pulsing, holds the highest level alone, and where the two types of means are combined, it is the verbal type, prayer, that a master curer may delegate.

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